



MAY 2013 NEWSPAPER

Decarcerate PA to Launch Ten-Day March to Harrisburg - Broad Coalition demands a People’s Budget, Not a Prison Budget

Philadelphia, PA –Decarcerate PA and a diverse coalition of supporting organizations announced today that they will march over a hundred miles from Philadelphia to Harrisburg to demand a budget that invests in Pennsylvania’s communities and not in unnecessary, unwanted prison construction. In order to emphasize their call for smarter funding priorities, speakers “broke ground” on a better Pennsylvania.

“It’s outrageous that over \$400 million is being poured into building new prisons while twenty-three schools in Philadelphia are being closed due to budget cuts. Legislators and Governor Corbett are hurting students across the state with these broken funding priorities” said Azeem Hill of the Philadelphia Student Union.

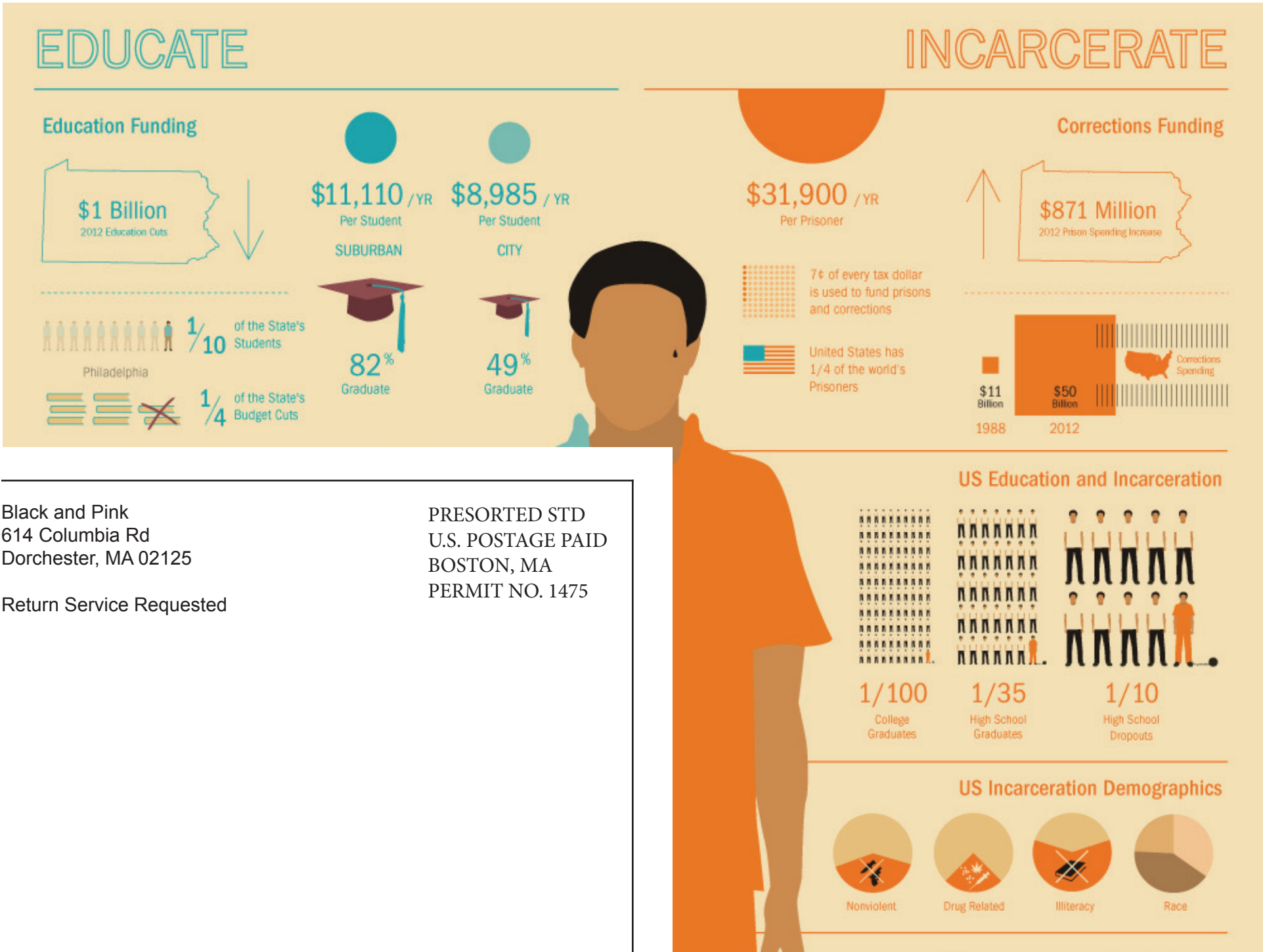
The march will begin with a kick-off rally in Love Park at noon on Saturday, May 25th. The marchers are calling on the General Assembly to refuse to pass a budget with increases in corrections spending while money is being spent on constructing new prisons. “The planned new prisons will add almost 1000 beds to the current system, even though the Department of Corrections claims that the prison population is starting to go down,” said Joshua Glenn of Decarcerate PA. In particular, the group is calling attention to the controversial \$400 million prison construction project on the grounds of SCI Graterford in Montgomery County. “Construction is still in its early stages,” said Mr. Glenn. “It’s not too late to cancel this wasteful project.”

Joined by City Councilman Kenyatta Johnson and representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools, DreamActivist PA, and other groups, organizers announced the march at a press conference in the Municipal Services Plaza while wearing construction hats and holding shovels, describing the event as a “ground-breaking ceremony” for building a better Pennsylvania. The marchers will arrive at the State Capitol in Harrisburg on June 3rd, just as the General Assembly reconvenes to discuss the budget.

“The annual cost to incarcerate an individual is about \$32,000, while the annual cost to educate a child is about \$11,000,” said Councilman Johnson. “Studies show that the more education a person receives, the less likely he or she is to engage in crime. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that there is far greater value in investing in education over incarceration.”

Along the ten-day march route, Decarcerate PA will hold rallies and community events in towns and cities as they pass through. On May 26th, the marchers will join other community organizations in Norristown for a rally against immigrant detention and deportation. “We need to invest in education and social services—not in a culture of criminalization and fear,” explained Jessica Hyejin Lee of Dream Activist PA, an undocumented-led group fighting to build the power of immigrants. Additional stops will be made in Haverford, Collegeville, Reading, Lebanon, and Hershey, among other communities. There will also be a companion march and Rally in Pittsburgh on May 26th. Decarcerate PA is calling on people from all over Philadelphia to join them in symbolically walking the first mile from Love Park to the Art Museum on May 25th, even if they cannot make the whole trek. [...] *Source: <http://decarceratepa.info>*

Image



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Call for Submissions
to New Erotica Zine!

Seeking erotic short stories and poems by Black & Pink incarcerated and free-world family members for a new ‘zine. Please send submissions to our Black & Pink - Gabrielle. This is a voluntary project, and no money will be offered for submissions, but you might get the chance to share your spicy story with many others! To subscribe to receive erotica, write to our new address, Black & Pink - Erotica.

A Message from Jason

Dear friends,
I hope this note finds you as well as possible. There are some big things in this month’s newspaper that need your opinions, reflections, and actions. We have an update on leadership/decision-making structure and are seeking feedback on a potential art program and use of grant money. We need your thoughts in order for our decisions to reflect the desires of our whole family.
This newspaper is coming to y’all just a bit after Mother’s Day. While Hallmark cards and silly slogans have taken over this holiday, there is still something really powerful rooted in its history. The first Mother’s Day was actually an explicitly anti-war gathering. In 1870 Julia Ward Howe called for women to come together and challenge the violence of the American Civil War and war going on in Europe. In her original proclamation she wrote, “From the bosom of the devastated Earth a voice goes up with our own. It says: ‘Disarm! Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.’ Blood does not wipe out dishonor, nor violence indicate possession.” She was calling for an end of violence. She was calling for mothers to gather together and resist the systems of patriarchal white supremacist violence that were destroying the earth, human life, and any possibility for authentic justice. Her message against war then can be used against war, violence, and, certainly, prisons today.
There are often so many more mothers in our lives who did not give birth to us. Many of us play the mothering role in other peoples’ lives even if we did not give birth to them. There are those in our family who have had their children taken from them due to the violence of the prison walls. There are those in our family who have been pregnant inside prison and forced to walk in shackles despite the harm it can cause. Others in our family have given birth inside prison hospitals with a leg chained to the bed. Some of our family members are mothers to other transgender women housed in men’s prisons, mothers who look out and try to keep their children safe. Mother’s Day can be a hard day to remember or honor when doing so from inside prison walls. It can also be a time to tell stories of surviving, to remind one another that our lives are far more complicated than a simple card allows us to be.

One of the things about being an open family is that we can have lots of mothers within Black and Pink. Many of us can take on this role. There was a prisoner writing project connected with Gay Community News in from the 1970s through early 1990s and it was headed up by Mother Mike Riegel. He earned the title “Mother” from the folks he was writing to and visiting even as he was struggling at the end of his life dying from AIDS related complications. One of the joys of being a big queer family is that we can all take on different roles as we are needed to. Mother’s Day does not have to only honor one type of person, it can honor anyone who is joining in the struggle to end harm and create a more just world.
Next month is Pride month. If you have any stories you would like to see shared at Pride celebrations in Boston, NYC, San Francisco, Chicago, and else where, please send them to us. We want to include our family in the Pride festivals and force people to remember the parts of our LGBTQ community who cannot be out in the streets. Also, next month we will have a report back from The Summit that happened in Massachusetts. We will also introduce some members of the new Chicago Black and Pink chapter. Black and Pink continues to grow and the free world folks are doing our best to meet the needs communicated to us. We will all keep on fighting knowing that once there were no prisons, that day will come again.
In loving struggle,
Jason

Thank you for everyone’s concerns for us regarding the Boston Marathon Bombings. We are OK, and we are still working for justice and peace in this world! With love and appreciation, Free World Leadership Circle

Advocacy: Help a Sister Out!

Hello Everyone,
If you would like to write a letter to support Jenni, an incarcerated B&P Leadership Circle member, below is a sample letter. You can write to the Warden at the address below. Please Note: This is not the correct address for Jenni, please do not write to her directly at the below address, it will not reach her, and will not help her cause. Though we all may feel anger and rage about these issues, calm & respectful letters will be most helpful at this time. Thank you everyone who can help out. -Ian, Black & Pink Free World Leadership Circle



To: Martin D. Biter, Warden
Kern Valley State Prison
3000 W. Cecil Ave
P.O. Box 3130
Delano, CA 93216-6000

Re: Searches of Inmate J. Gann E23852
Date: (Date you are writing)

Dear Warden Biter,
I hope this letter finds you well. I write to you today to express concern for one of the people incarcerated at Kern Valley. Jenni (John David) Gann is an inmate at KVSP, number E23852. As a transgender woman, she has repeatedly experienced sexual harassment during cross-gender strip searches. This has included ridiculing her anatomy, threatening her, and exposing her to male inmates.
I write to you out of personal concern for Jenni. I also write as a member of Black & Pink. Black & Pink is a nationwide organization of over 2,500 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) prisoners and Free World allies. We recognize that unfortunately, LGBTQ people are often targeted for unfair treatment in prison. We work to stop all discriminatory treatment, including that which Jenni is experiencing in your institution.
I appeal to your position of leadership at KVSP. Please see to it that this sexual harassment stops and does not continue. Please refrain from strip searches unless absolutely necessary; have female staff perform these invasive searches; and, at the very least, conduct all searches in a professional manner that respects Gann’s status as a person, and her particular status as a transgender woman in a men’s prison.
Thank you for your time and attention to this. Please feel free to contact me, and I look forward to hearing that this issue has been resolved appropriately.
Respectfully,
(Your Name)

Disclaimer:
Please note that the ideas and opinions expressed in the Black & Pink Newspaper are solely those of the authors and artists and do not necessarily reflect the views of Black & Pink. Black & Pink makes no representations as to the accuracy of any statements made in the Newspaper, including but not limited to legal and medical information. Authors and artists bear sole responsibility for their work.
Distributed to over 2500 people in prison all around the US.

Letters to our Family

I know

I know, that you see it
I know, that you feel it
I know, that true love lives within you but you don't know how to show it
I know, that you want to let it out
I know, that you want to shout
I know, that you want to show the ones who are hiding what true love is all about
I know, that you really care
I know, that you want to share
I know, that you want to open your heart and openly shed a tear
So next time you're feeling low
And you're not sure where you want to go
Just take a deep breath, count to three, and then say to yourself, "I know."

-By True Love, Pennsylvania

Dear Friends and Family,
First off, love, peace, and salutations to my brothers and sisters. I want to say to the ones who are not looking for trouble and who give respect wanting nothing but the same in return, Thank You and God bless you because that is the way we should all carry ourselves, not just in prison but in life all together. To the few people who are going around picking on people, talking about them, and making threats, stop! It is people like that who make things hard for people like me. To threaten to do harm to someone like me who only wants to help my brothers and sisters is what makes so many of us want to stand alone when what we all really need to do is stand together. Think about it!

-True Love, Pennsylvania

Dear Black & Pink Family,
My name is Raymond. I am a 31 year old openly gay man here in Oregon. I've been locked up for over 11 years and I've been out of the closet now for going on 7 years.
As I read the letters from other people in Black & Pink who are gay and locked up, I realize that I have been very fortunate. Before I came out in 2006, I was extremely nervous and scared. I was scared that both my family and my friends wouldn't understand and would turn their backs on me. They're both very important to me.
When I came out, just about everyone said, "So, we kinda already knew," and I was like, "OK, cool!" It was a major relief to me to know that it was going to be Ok for me. I even called my Grandma Honey to tell her I was gay. And you know what she told me? She was like, "I already know. Actually I knew for sure when you were 16. I just wanted you to feel comfortable and want to tell us."
Now, no matter what, you're always going to come across one or two people who are pricks and try to put you down. But who cares, they suck and you're awesome. I've had guys tell me that they appreciate me for being the real me.
Black & Pink, I love reading the letters and stories that you include in every issue. I thank you for everything that you have done, all of the advocating for all of the people who are locked up and put away. It truly means a lot to so many people. Keep doing what you do because you do it the best.
-Raymond, Oregon

Dear Black & Pink,
Hey my family of GLBT out there in the world and the ones that are locked up in the system. I am a 31 year old Bisexual male that is locked up for some things I did and didn't do.
The state I live in (Minnesota) has some messed up laws. This is the only state that has conditional release (which is double jeopardy). So I have been down 8 ½ years when my plea bargain was 39 months (3 yrs 3 months)! I have lost my Mom almost 8 years ago, and my Papa passed last October. I don't have anyone out there. So I truly look forward for the next issue of Black & Pink!
As for what others have said about bullying needing to stop, I agree 100%! There's not a single day that goes by that someone isn't missing with me because of my sexuality. I see the ones that talk all the sh-- are the ones that aren't happy with themselves and don't know who they really are in life!
I know, because I will admit I was a gay basher 'till I found the real me and now that I came out of the closet and started to have respect for myself, things started to change for me. So with this I wish everyone much love.
Mir (Peace) my family,
Chris W., Minnesota

Dear Black & Pink,
I've received your Newspaper for several months now. As with most recipients of your motivating words, I too am engrossed in each issue as if it were my only communication. I'm shamelessly addicted to B&P.
The reason I'm writing is to lend my prayers and thoughts to those brave participants and victims of the tragedy that happened at the Boston Marathon. I just cried watching the News. My heart broke. Although I don't personally know anyone that was there, I have my LGBTQ family everywhere. I hope somehow our limitless imaginations at B&P can and will find a very special way to convey all our anger, pain and love. As we- LGBTQ- celebrate incredible human resiliency, lets invite those who were hurt to a hug.

Through my bars, I'm sending my prayers their way through Black & Pink.
Chris S., California

Dear Black & Pink,
It's amazing now that I have stepped back from the anger and the hatred, how easy it is to recognize it in other people. When it has control of you, you don't ever see the pain and anguish and hurt that you cause. Now I know one of the biggest mistakes I ever made in life was allowing myself to be controlled by hate in a lousy effort to hide, not only from the world, but from myself. Ten long hard suffering years before all the hints hit me hard. In my struggle I destroyed many lives, including the lives of those who were willing to open up and become my friends.
While incarcerated in Minnesota, I began to open up. I put aside the anger, the false beliefs, and allowed myself to realize that just because someone isn't white, straight, or of my faith, doesn't mean they are not good people. I made some real true friends there who have stuck by me these last few years, even though I betrayed them in the end too. I am still thankful to them.

As this long lesson comes to an end, I am faced with my biggest challenge yet; getting out and staying out. After ten years of running the yards as a gang member and white supremacist, I broke down and stopped pretending. I covered all my swastikas and other symbols of hate, and did something I never thought I could do. I stepped out of the shadows and out of the closet. I caught a lot of strife, but a lot of the guys respected me for it. The ones who didn't turned away and caused trouble. Six months later I was forced to leave the yard, but I don't care because I left it knowing who I am.
In a few months I will be home but I will never forget those I have left behind. And despite not having to fight everyday for my life and respect behind a gray wall, I will be carrying on that fight for every one of you, my brothers and sisters, everyday that I live.
In Struggle and Love,
Cassie, Pennsylvania

Congratulations Sasha Taylor!



Trans Folks Down for the Fight

Dear Black & Pink,

Hi, my name is Markiesha, formerly known as C-majic. I was once a member of a well known gang, but I've voluntarily stepped away from it. Let me tell you more to give you insight as to why this is the most important and potentially the most dangerous and boldest move I've ever made.

As a younger being I always had the callings of the feminine. I've always been sexually attracted to males and all they've got and think they've got (LOL). My first experience was at age six and I loved it, although secretly. I grew up in boys' homes and foster homes with military parents at times, and us "sissies" were picked out and targeted right away. So somehow I learned to be both, but without the feminine aura that I so craved to let out. Oh! I had times like a Halloween look-alike contest when I got to revel in my true beauty and show the world the real me, but to them it was a game, which devastated me. They couldn't see the truth- that this was who I really was, not just a good act.

I ran away for the first time at age nine. A guy picked me up, told me I was beautiful, asked if I had ever messed around. That's when I found my release. I was an excellent drag queen on my constant run-away excursions, and even better at what I did.

When I was 13 I got introduced to some of these well known gang members one night. I was being robbed and the robbers attempted to rape me. The gang helped me, and that day forth, I leaned forward and backward to impress and be accepted by them. Did things I can't speak of. Now, most of these so-called homies knew how I was. Would late night creep, etc. But now I've been on lock quite a while. I've had to fight and do things I wouldn't normally do because of my sexuality. Most my homies claim to have not known, even though they did. Several times they've tried to smash me off units. Now they claim to want to kill me. The system doesn't believe. I have not been claiming or accepted by the gang for over 4 years, really since '08, when I would not kick another girl out of my cell (they thought I was dyking). I'm a girl who likes men!!

Anyway, I'm here now in Ad-Seg 'cause this guy I was messing with was placing money on my books. Cuz I have no family or outside friends. Plus, he was my boyfriend. He assumed I was sexing my cellie and wanted me to put him out. I had 2 months until I could go to a better custody level, so I told him No. He used my letters to him to copy my handwriting, and knowing of my past affiliation, he made it look like I threatened him. I've been back here for 2 years now. But now I am fully Femme in actions and dress and I'm coming up for release. But they have a hit on me. I know because I've heard. I am no coward. So I am going to try to get out no matter.

I tell this excerpt from my life to say this: Girls, we are people too and we have the right to live as we wish. The system and people are unjust hypocrites. The inmates attack us out of fear. Don't Run, it only increases the predatory nature of these people. Stand up for yourselves, fight back, stand strong. No person deserves to be ostracized or attacked because of their sexuality or gender. I encourage you all to be who you are no matter the consequences. Now I feel freer than I have ever felt. I feel more love for myself and respect at who I am. I am no longer hiding, trying to impress a bunch of cowards. They attack us 'cuz they fear the possibility of wanting or being us. And to all the closet freaks- free yourselves. Freedom feels great. There is no love or security in another, the only person you can be real with is yourself and once you're real with yourself and love yourself, you'll not give 2 cents worth a damn about what the next person thinks or says about you. To care one way or the next about what someone else thinks ends up being self-abuse. Treat yourself- no one else can. What's real?? Love is.

-Markiesha, Texas

For My Sisters

This is for my sisters whom I love and respect, for my sisters that find themselves in possessive relationships. You are strong! Don't allow yourself to be used and abused by anyone who claims to love you. We are not here just for sexual release. We are strong and independent, powerful, beautiful. We are grown adults, free of bonds, not to be possessed, but loved and cherished. Love yourselves above all others because you matter first. For my sisters, you're in control, not them. 50-50 or nothing.



Love y'all,
Joseph aka Jadea,
Pennsylvania

Don't Judge Me

Don't Judge me...
From the waist up
Don't judge me...
By my looks
Don't judge me...
If you don't know me
Don't judge me...
It's not your right
Don't judge me...
But if you want to judge me
Remember only God
Can judge me
So don't judge me!!

-Queen City Shay, New York



On The Labor Movement and Transmisogyny

By witchymorgan

Another Black trans woman was found murdered the other day. The details of her death are so similar to the other deaths, that I avoided reading about it for a while. Articles like that upset me for many reasons and once I get drawn in, its hard for me to surface again with hope.

But I cannot run forever.

So I read the articles. And of course there was mispronouncing, using wrong names, using mug shots, delving into her past that might be relevant as to why she was murdered (i.e. the fact that she was harassed and brutalized by the police) but completely missing the point and only serving to further dehumanize her.

Even in death, the way we are spoken about by the mainstream cishet world is traumatizing and violent. Even in death, trans women of color cannot escape the trauma of colonialism and genocide. And I can't help but think about trans day of remembrance which is almost always all white trans women organizing and present for it and almost all trans women of color dead and being "remembered".

Our bodies are exploited by white trans and queer folks to further their assimilation into colonial power. They use our deaths to justify their inclusion in heteropatriarchy.

I can't help but make connection between this and May Day. May Day is International Workers Day. It is a day that marks the successes of the Labor Movement here and internationally. It is a recognition that globalization and capitalism exploits billions of people for the benefit of very few.

The bodies of trans women of color are exploited in a similar manner. We do not own our own labor, our own deaths. The labor of our deaths are exploited by the mainstream queer rights movement to prove why assimilation, inclusion the military and the strengthening of the prison industrial complex will keep white queers safe. Our deaths are exploited to sell shit like marriage equality. We are not allowed the dignity to determine what our deaths will mean.

It is amazing to me just how different forms of oppression intersect and interact with each other. I'm constantly learning just how deep this shit goes and it confirms for me even more that we will not be free unless we take down all of these systems simultaneously.



About witchymorgan, <http://atriptothemorg.wordpress.com>
I'm a 22 year old [free world friend of Black & Pink] womanist, sex positive, pansexual, polyamorous, queer, bruja, transwoman. Social justice activist by day, social justice activist by night. Fun!

Dear Friends of Black & Pink,

I received the new format of the Newspaper and it's great! I wanted to add some information from Pennsylvania about being confined in solitary for being HIV+. It partly depends on how long your sentence is. In this facility it's important because one can be sent to Admin Separation on a Restricted Release list, if signed by the appropriate staff at the Central Office. Basically, it boils down to sentence. If a lifer has HIV or any other blood-borne disease and receives sexual misconducts, Central Office will see that person as a threat after a few misconducts because the inmate is in for life and may risk "infecting" others on purpose. I'm not saying anyone particular is doing this on purpose, but if one had a number of misconducts, they would have Restricted Release under C: Sexual assault history, and/or B. Assaultive history against inmates, or maybe even E: Threat to orderly operation of a facility.

I would share more policies, but is depends on sentence date. I can only say I know inmates with Hep C in population. In fact, one assaulted me 3 times. The facility let me out of the RHU first, then about 30 days later let him out. We are kept on separate sides of the facility.

I do think it is unfair in general to segregate people for being HIV+, and we should continue to fight this. My prayers are with you.

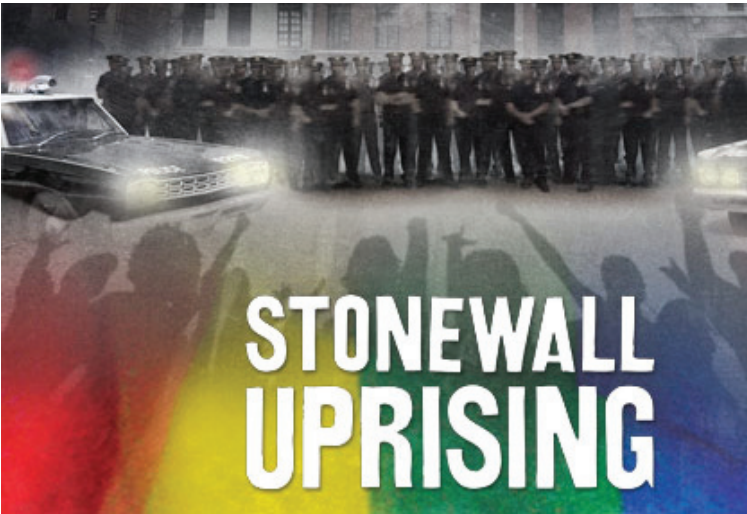
Sincerely,
Jason, Pennsylvania

Dear Black & Pink Family,

My name is Frank. Myself and my fellow inmate Terry have effectively created change at our institution. We were being discriminated against when it came to religious and educational films that are shown weekly. We requested "Stonewall Uprising," depicting a pivotal moment in our fight for equality.

We had requested this film and been told "No" due to it being a PREA issue and due to the violence depicted against the police. We wrote grievance after grievance on this issue arguing that Muslims get representation in films here at our prison, so do Jews, Wiccans, Native Americans, Catholics, Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Scientologists. And during Black History month, this institution shows civil rights films that have a similar type of struggle and violence that we were rejected for! We stated all of this in our grievances and were still met with opposition 'cause it was a gay issue. After 9 grievances from me and 9 from Terry, we have a partial approval from the Super. We will not let this stand. Prisons treat gay people like we are not human, and it is not acceptable to me. Terry and I stand up for ourselves on a daily basis whether it be against cop or con, physically or verbally. We fear no one, and you can all do the same. Be proud of who you are no matter what. We will be here in Mass. Keeping up the good fight for our rights as human beings to express ourselves and love who we love.

Love Always,
Frank & Terry, Massachusetts



History: AIDS Activists Throw Condoms at State Prison

by Brendan Lyons.Times Union. Albany, NY. December 18, 2002

In Coxsackie, N.Y., Tuesday, several AIDS activists marched to the gates of Coxsackie Correctional Facility and dropped 2,000 condoms at the feet of corrections officers. New York state prohibits inmates from having condoms, and officials say sex between inmates is illegal. But members of ACT UP-NY claim state officials are ignoring the reality of inmates having sex, and some prisoners are becoming infected with HIV behind bars. "The New York state prison system is a factory for thousands of new HIV infections each year," said Ken Bing, an ACT UP/NY member. "When prisoners are released, those new HIV infections become a public health crisis for their home communities. Prisons are pouring a huge HIV burden out into New York state, which has a horrific human cost as well as a financial cost to the state," Bing said.

Thoughts Fall Like Rain

My thoughts fall like rain,
brought up in a cold world surrounded by cold blooded wars
witnessing destruction and pain
My thoughts fall like rain,
living in ghettos, poverty centerfold, government trying to subdue my
thoughts- but...
My thoughts fall like rain,
Brothers and Sisters falling victim to violence and prisons
Children growing up in parentless homes turning to the streets to
provide them with guidance and their next hot meal...
My tears fall like rain,
but I will continue to be that voice, I won't run or cower in a corner
and just let...
My thoughts fall like rain
Juvenile homes, Prisons, Detention Centers, are only modern day
concentration camps filled with "Prisoners of WAR" that the U.S.
Government considers "enemy combatants"...
My thoughts fall like rain,
Trayvon Martin, Alan Blueford, Christopher Dorner, Boston
Bombings...
System flawed,
A manifestation of a crumbling modern day Roman Empire...
My gun cocks from Pain,
but my thoughts rumble on,
My thoughts fall like rain
They say 25 years may be the lifespan of a young black male
I am 25 years old now...
Will I live to see 30?
I don't know- but...
My thoughts fall like rain,
Due to the situation, Death will only be a Release...
for tomorrow lies only in God
My thoughts fall like rain

-Christopher S from Louisiana

Love Me & I'll Love You

I'm currently incarcerated, only free within my mind,
I've learned to remain humble, and not show the realness inside.
I'm chained to a bunch of strangers, but none are really chained to me.
We may share the same hurt & pain, but that's really all you can see.
Captive in reality as my days & nights are truly numbered,
I live the life of a free person & still I hide with great hunger.
A hunger for love, acceptance & equality and the ability to see,
To discover a society who will allow me to be me.
I was born to talk and act the way that I do,
Proud to be Gay, but I am nothing less than you.
If we were all made in the same image and likeness of one,
Then why do you frown upon me as if I was none?
We all have a story to tell and I damn sure got a right to tell mine
So I encouraged all the readers to excel instead of hide
Your pride is my pride, and it gives strength to gay pride
So if you'll love me, I'll love you.

Dutch, Illinois

Perfect Stranger

How do you feel about my abuse from your hands?
Do you know your voice brings fear in my dreams,
Did someone cause you to pass on this anger and pain?
I wish I could give back to you these worthless lands!
Lands of shame and pain, lands of danger and anger,
Too many miles over these years full of resentment and tears.
To be someone I don't know,
Wishing to be a New Perfect Stranger
Having little besides what was given to battle fears,
Emotions wrought of desperation weathering losses of loved ones,
Days come and go forever praying for a hand of direction
Didn't any of you see with your eyes or hear with your ears?
I guess not, one too many Lines, Joints, and Beers,
Blinded and Deafened to the point of ignorant neglect
To be someone I don't know
Wishing to be a New Perfect Stranger.

-Marrin aka Duck Tape, Florida

Black & Pink Family,

Hey guys! It's Billy and I want to get in your heads awhile. Most of us were not sentenced to die behind these walls; well, at least not by our trial judge. However, most are allowing the system and our attitudes toward ourselves and others within our gay community to do just that. We're not putting much thought into our health and how we can protect each other in our relationships while we're here.

For me, the last 20 years has been easy- complete abstinence. It's probably the only choice I had. When I got here, I knew without a doubt this decision has saved my life, and I'm sure others that I would have put at risk. Again, when I entered prison, I was morally, spiritually, and physically bankrupt. I was a mess, boys and girls. My intake physical and bloodwork scared me to death. I never knew such panic while waiting for those results. I'll spell it out: Hep A (neg), Hep B (neg), Hep C (pos), Syphilis (neg), and “the one” HIV (neg). I must have cried for two days. I felt so lucky after the way I had been living before coming to prison. Being an IV drug user, daily, for years, and had “never” practiced safe sex, only having Hep C was lucky. Aah, then came my education; Hep C is not a pretty infection. Like I said, I've been here in the Texas prison system for 20 years. I've seen many years of high risk behavior from men in our community. One big problem is we don't watch for the heterosexuals locked up who are infected, and who don't care for themselves, either. It's like riding a motorcycle, in which WE watch out for the other guy, too. Don't we? And, we don't take precautions in our own relationships. We can! But it starts with us. DO NOT rely on the system or your partner to initiate your health care.

Here in Texas, it's “bread sack” or “bareback.” Now, I don't know about any of you, but for me it's “hell to the no.” No bread sack. That leaves me three options: 1) I know I'm in control- abstinence. I hate to say this, but that is a ridiculous idea and has been very difficult on me, in many ways. 2) Take steps to make our high risk behavior on the lower end of a high risk category. 3) Use condoms, and educate ourselves and our partners to do the same. Let me share this: 15 years after finding out I was positive with Hep C, news came after an annual blood work that I was no longer “positive.” My provider explained it this way: Either a mistake was made in the beginning, or I'm one of that 1/10th of one percent whose liver has healed itself. I believed the first. By having that belief, it showed me how careless I've been my whole life, and that same carelessness could continue, or I can change my life just one more way.

There is mostly unprotected sex in prison, unless you're one of the lucky ones who have a guard who will occasionally slip you a few condoms. (That's probably not going to happen, like the third option above). I really believe the reason they don't pass out condoms in prison is pretty clear. For heterosexuals, sex with condoms is considered an unfortunate necessary exception to the otherwise natural norm. I don't see it as natural. However, for gay men, sex with condoms is considered a deviation from the only acceptable option. That's why we're not offered them. I say it's another double standard gay men live or die with every day. It is “instinctual” for straights, but considered “demonic” when done by gay men. However, studies show that a majority of gay men who have sex with men use condoms- consistently.

I've heard staff and guards degrade us as too horny or too reckless to use condoms, even if they were passed out. We're written off as having a self-sabotaging death wish because our minds are so damaged by homosexuality. The death wish excuse has even been used to justify why it's not even talked about or at least given thought to passing out condoms here in prison. Ask me, it is bullshit. I've been here 20 years and I've seen all kinds of sex encounters take place. I've even held “jiggers” for men having sex. Even for the guard and inmate relationships- you can bet your ass those guards wore condoms. (I see the bright side; at least one of us is being offered the comfort of safety!)

The U.S. AIDS Foundation, CDC, and most people with common sense these days classifies and knows anal sex without condoms as a high risk activity for HIV transmission. That's why this heads up from Billy to my brothers and sisters at Black & Pink, I want to focus our attention. Boys and girls- we already know the risks- so do they (the system). Yet, they won't give us condoms. Although more cases of transmission are detected each year in prisons. Also, most have been attributed to the bottom partner, but get this: the AIDS Foundation call this a high risk activity, being the “top.” That's right boys and girls, top or bottom, we all get sick!

Pretty much everyone on this unit knows my involvement with different organizations in North America on the issues of gay rights and health care. Why? Well, this is and of itself, a different matter. Right now, I want to share a few tips for us to stay alive. The refusal to consider another's risk of harm just baffles me because these men are wishing to express themselves with one another. Be it love, or as I've heard many times, “It's just my hustle.” A guard said to me that I'm sending a dangerous message and undermining the prevention taught by TDCJ. That's pretty much a joke. Yes! There is a prevention class taught in this prison. Here's what's taught: complete abstinence is the only choice. Yes, our educators do give us the facts if we choose to get involved with someone else. In the class (it's called Peer Health Education), their hands are so tied that they can't even show us how to use condoms. The only curriculum taught is by outside influences with no other views except complete abstinence. It doesn't work- and it won't. It's like the “scared straight” program they watch on TV (yet still become my cellie in a year!)


There are no 100% safe ways of sex, but there are “harm reduction” ways that might just save someone from getting infected. All must be explored because total abstinence does not work, cannot work, and will never work 100% of the time. That's why, boys and girls, I feel it's so important to share tips and facts for real life. So, for the rest of this letter, I'm going to share a lot of stats and ideas that might save your or your partner's ass (every pun intended). Because of this state's ignorance, their staunch refusal to consider multiple harm reduction techniques for safer sex or sex in general, it's killing us. I thank Black & Pink for this platform they have given us to look after each other. It's no different than George Bush and the Pope telling folks to abstain from sex before marriage and always be faithful afterwards. The presumption that you and you alone know the single solution that will work for all people, is condescending, paternalistic, and responsible for millions of deaths and many more millions of taxpayer dollars.

First, here are some statistics which I think you might find informative. Good News! Not all HIV (pos) persons will develop AIDS. HIV/AIDS transmission for the year 2012 (est): [...] States reporting highest AIDS numbers: California, New York, Florida, Texas, Illinois, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia. HIV/AIDS in Texas Prisons for 2012: 2,386 known positive on intake (that's a new person coming into the system). Boys and Girls, there are at least 27,384 cases of positive incarcerated here in Texas! And, they still don't think condoms should be passed out. Treatment for HIV/AIDS in Texas prisons is as follows: Offenders known to be HIV(+), both prior to admission to TDCJ, or at intake, or during their incarceration, are admitted into Chronic Care Clinic. Depending on their HIV/AIDS status, they will be evaluated by a Provider, usually a Nurse Practitioner since Doctors can be rare. Some are staffed by RN's as Providers. Either way, every three months or more frequently, if needed, blood testing, x-rays, and mental and physical evaluations will be completed. Medications may or may not be provided, dependent on medical evaluation. Facts you may want to share: More than 18,000 die each year of HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Texas ranks 4th in the reported cases in the U.S. Every 9.5 minutes, someone in the U.S. is diagnosed with HIV. Men having sex with men: 44X higher rate than other men. Average cost per year for treatment: \$20,000. These facts and stats are just for HIV/AIDS. My friends, Hep C is more prevalent in prison and transmitted easier than HIV. Let me give credit to these resources for these stats:

AIDS Foundation Houston and Texas Dept of Criminal Justice; Gilead Sciences; Bristol-Myer Squibb Co.; Vertex Pharmaceuticals; Texas Dept of State Health Services; HIV/STD Comprehensive Service Branch; And, a very good friend who wishes to remain anonymous.

Now listen to some common sense ways Billy believes just might help. The tips I wish to share won't change the high risk nature of anal sex without condoms, but employing them, or at least some, can keep your good times at the lower end of the high risk category. I believe any chance at non-exposure is worth as least listening to, no matter how small that chance is.

- Don't ask if he (or she) is “clean.” Ask when they were last tested and what the results were. Better yet, offer that same info about you.
- HIV is mostly shared by people who “don't know” their status. NOT people who know they are HIV positive. If he said he's HIV negative, but hasn't been for a test recently, he doesn't know his actual status! Here in Texas, we are allowed to request a test once a year, no questions asked. I do, it's a birthday present to myself. I know I said I've abstained, but there are other ways to contract HIV and for my peace of mind- why not?
- If one of you is HIV positive and the other is negative, talk about viral load together. If you're both positive, you may not have the same strains of the virus or the same reactions to medicines.
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections – STI's. STI's make HIV positive men more infectious and HIV negative men more vulnerable to infection. The most common symptom of STI's is to show “no” symptom at all. *Continued next page*

ACT-UP in JET 8/21/1992
 **CONDOM DROP:** It was raining condoms recently at the maximum security prison in Waupun, Wisconsin, after the radical AIDS protest group Act Up, hired a plane to drop hundreds of the condoms to promote safe sex. Condoms are banned in state prisons, and the condoms, most of which were scattered by the winds into a nearby neighborhood, were gathered up and seized.

Continued

- Use lots of lube. Tons of lube. Lube reduces friction which reduces the number of micro tears inside you. Tears give an entryway into the blood system.
 - The lining of the butt is delicate and can be damaged easily. Let your top know how hard you want to ride, once you've relaxed the muscles in your butt. And bare backing after fisting or rough foreplay increases risk.
 - It's safer to pull out before cumming. Pulling out right before and watching your spray all over his back or stomach can increase your pleasure without added risk to you or your partner.
 - The longer and harder you go at it, the bigger the risk. Foreplay makes for a better lover!
 - For those who know their status: HIV negative dudes might choose to give rather than receive. HIV positive dudes might choose to receive rather than give.
 - Try to avoid poppers when bare backing. They dilate blood vessels in the rectum, increasing blood exposures while you have sex. Oh come on guys, if I've kicked heroin two times in prison, don't tell me some of us can't get poppers. Remember, we're trying to be real here.
 - Don't douche right before or after bottoming.
 - Get vaccinated for Hep A and B- it's free in prison, at least in Texas. I know I've been vaccinated!
 - You don't have to bare back with everyone. For example, my anonymous friend suggested dry humping. I forgive him- he's straight. But a good hand job and wet kiss will do just fine. For those who like the intimacy of not using condoms, get that rush with one regular guy. And, do you best to stay safer with the rest.
 - There is no sure way, but at least we can look after each other and our friends. We don't want to come to prison and contract something we didn't come here with. Transmission of HIV and other blood-borne STI's among inmates has been well documented by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Most jails and prisons lack funds and infection-control expertise. That's why Billy says, “It's up to each one of us to stay as healthy as possible.” Although illegal, consensual and non-consensual sexual activity that places inmates at high risk for HIV transmission has been well documented. Although condoms are highly effective at preventing the transmission of HIV infection and other STI's, and although the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has strongly suggested making condoms available to the inmate population in the U.S. Correctional facilities, only two state prison systems and five local jail systems make condoms available to inmates. It sounds to me like they couldn't care less if we die or not.
- Please, stay safe for Billy and be kind to one another with all the love I have for each of you and myself.
- Peace,
Billy, Texas

Black & Pink Incarcerated Family Feedback!

Since September 2011 Black and Pink has had a semi-functional incarcerated leadership circle, due to communication issues things have not always worked out as ideally as possible. That said, the incarcerated leadership circle was instrumental in decisions about fiscal sponsorship of Black and Pink, sharing opinions/concerns about our direction, and making decisions about appropriate banking practices. The Free World Leadership Circle (LC) currently made up of Dorsey, Ian, Jason, Johannes, and Reed would like to make a pretty major change. Rather than just have 10 individuals from the incarcerated family making decisions, we want to expand the decision-making to everyone who is interested. This form is our first opportunity to try out this decision-making process, an opportunity to make a decision about whether or not this is a process folks like.

1) Leadership Structure Change Proposal

Every month the newspaper would include a sheet (like this) with an update on some of the conversations happening in the free world leadership circle. It would include some multiple choice options for decisions, as well as open space for giving further opinions about the updates, or about other ideas and feedback. It is essential that Black and Pink have direction from people inside the prison walls, in addition to the direction and facilitation provided by the Free World LC. As an abolitionist organization, we are most directly accountable to people currently incarcerated. This process would facilitate the involvement of more incarcerated Black and Pink members in the decision-making for the family. Decisions will be about structure changes, organizational statements, new projects, general reflections, etc. The answers would then be sent back to the office and reviewed during the hour before Free World LC meetings. If the volume is too high for that, we will also invite mail processor volunteers to review the answers as well. The increase in responses means the Free World LC will likely be unable to reply personally to most leadership feedback. The opinions will then be shared at the Free World leadership circle meeting, who will coordinate the work moving forward, guided by the purpose, values and analysis, and the results of the previous month's questions will be put in the newsletter.

2) Revival of the art program in a new way

Recently, an avid art collector has approached Black & Pink with interest in donating money to Black & Pink artists in exchange for pieces of self-expressive art from the Black & Pink family (and has already donated towards quite a few pieces of artwork). Some of this art could be shown in a gallery/museum next year. None of the art would be resold and the collection would not be disassembled and instead, far in the future, would be donated to an LGBTQ archive. In order to facilitate the collection of the artwork in a way that's respectful of the artists and enables prompt replies to their mail, Black & Pink would hire a formerly incarcerated person as an Art Program Coordinator. This program could provide financial support for prisoner artists and enhance their self-worth through showcasing their talent, provide employment to a formerly incarcerated person, and raise awareness by displaying the art publicly in a gallery/museum.

3) Hiring a director

In the near future, we may have the opportunity to receive a multi-year grant that can be used to support the efforts of Black and Pink. We are considering allotting a majority of the funds for a modest salary for Jason as Director/Lead Organizer. Currently, Black & Pink is run entirely by free world volunteers, and struggles to keep on top of all of its many goals. The Director/Lead Organizer position would work on advocacy, volunteer coordination, coalition and partnership building, and support the potential Art Program Coordinator. The rest of the funds would be put towards publishing our newsletter, promoting Black & Pink and the pen-pal program, office supplies and event supplies.

rip slip here

PLEASE MAIL THIS SLIP SOON TO **BLACK AND PINK-FEEDBACK** TO PARTICIPATE! Feel free to write more on a separate page.

1) Do you think this feedback process aligns with our principles as a family and we should move forward this way?

___Yes ___No Other/More:_____

2) Should we move forward with the revival of the art program in this new way?

___Yes ___No Other/More:_____

3) Do you think we should allocate a majority of the potential funds to a Director/Lead Organizer position, and the rest of the funds to publishing our newsletter, promoting Black & Pink and the pen-pal program, office supplies and event supplies?

___Yes ___No Other/More:_____

Poem: Little Girl

by Janani Balasubramanian of
DarkMatter
Performed at a Black & Plnk
co-sponsored event

trigger warning:
suicide, murder, death

I started thinking about killing
myself
when I was five.
Not about killing myself as I was,
cute and full of possibility,
but about killing an
older, taller version,
maybe one with longer hair,
or none at all.
I would never see myself coming,
loom outside
police cars hovering past,
they would never suspect the palm
tree kid,
the balloon pants,
the toy pistol and the real knife.
2030, you see, will be a simpler
time,
where murder only happens under
state surveillance,
where the hemlock is grown on the
white house lawn,
where we have robots to do all the
dirty work,
where everything is that much
more honest.
Five year old me would sidle up
next to the house I'd live in,
look through a window at my lover
give myself imploring eyes
like there's something I need to tell
you.

Tonight I need to kill you.
Tonight I need to be a little girl who
kills you.

I figured this way
I would know when I will die,
and how,
and who would do it,
that I would die
at the hands of a good kid
at least,
and I would live to just under 40,
like any good short story.
It would be the perfect blend of
murder and suicide,
the consent written long ago.

I wonder sometimes if I've done it,
if time travel comes with
its own kind of amnesia.
Is it like being black-out drunk?
Is it like that?
Will you tell yourself about it later?
Like hey, you were
mad funny in the 1980s.
And the times
we had in the precambrian,
oh man.
And if time-travel
is like being black-out drunk,
then I probably didn't
walk in a straight line
and I probably
landed wrong.

I have all these patchy memories
of New York in the 1860s,
all the bustle
and the abolitionists
and poor dusty white kids in gray

caps
and the animals!
New York City was a zoo back
then:
pigs, dogs, monkeys,
even some cross-bred thing like a
tunafish with hands.
Old police journals will say things
like
"oh I spotted some colored women
today
and a tunafish with hands".

I have also seen Gandhi
reach the great saltlicker ocean,
and Hildegard of Bingen
invent marijuana,
and the Mesopotamians
invent a universe from a castrated
god,
and lots of unnamed people run
in a revolution
though I'm not sure where.

When you're in kindergarten,
and think the universe
is a conspiracy of microcuts
that life
is a series of meaningless poses
they tell you you're so
imaginative
or gifted.
They give you
a new library card,
and a crayon.
No one can really be that bitter or
sad
they think
without having lived
for millenia

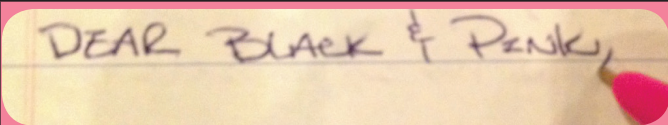
first.
It's easier to believe
that children are born
angelic and empty
rather than hardened
by the violence
enacted against
their many
many
mothers.

While you were kicking and
screaming
there was a genocide happening
just two centuries prior,
maybe a famine,
and a war across the world at the
same time.

We are all here
because our ancestors
did things
to survive,
and because we did things
to survive.

Because our mother's wombs
are where we first learn
to be violent,
because we scratched
and ate them
dry and red.
Because we
swallow history whole
and cannot birth it away.
And maybe a little girl
will kill me tomorrow.

Addresses: Please note our new address for all mail!

	Black & Pink - _____ 614 Columbia Rd Dorchester, MA 02125
If you would like to request:	Please write this in the top line of the address:
Newsletter Subscriptions (Start or Stop)	Black & Pink - Newsletter Subscriptions
Newsletter Submissions (Poems, Art & Stories)	Black & Pink - Newsletter Submissions
“Outside” Free Pen-Pal Request (Please note: Pen-Pal Request Form will be in this newsletter quarterly)	Black & Pink - Pen-Pal
Address Change (Will take a little time to update; at this time, we are mostly unable to send back issues.)	Black & Pink - Address Change
Black & Pink Organization Feedback (especially the slip on Page 7)	Black & Pink - Feedback
Request Erotica	Black & Pink - Erotica
Submit to Erotica Zine	Black & Pink - Gabrielle
Religious Support	Black & Pink - Religion
Volunteering (Send thank you cards to donors, etc.)	Black & Pink - Volunteer
Advocacy Requests (include details about situation and thoughts about how calls or letters might help)	Black & Pink - Advocacy
Art: Stay tuned for the results from this month's Feedback slip to see if there will be an art program revival	

LEGAL: Consider writing to Lambda Legal for support or referrals with legal issues that you are having. “Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work.” Lambda Legal, National Office 120 Wall Street, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10005, 212-809-8585

Assistance with legal research for everyone, and preparing for disciplinary and parole hearings *only* for people in Massachusetts. Hotline (9am-5pm EST): 617-495-3127
By mail: Prison Legal Assistance Project, 6 Everett Street, Suite 5107, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA 02138

Another resource to turn to, if you can afford the subscription (\$24 yearly, payable with new stamps), is Prison Legal News. This resource was co-started by a former gay prisoner and Men Against Sexism organizer, Ed Mead, though now it is run by Paul Wright. You can reach them by writing to: Prison Legal News, P.O. Box 2420, West Brattleboro, VT 05303

SURVIVORS: Just Detention International provides support for prisoners who are survivors of sexual abuse. Write them at the legal address below for a packet. Each packet includes an introductory letter, a list of local resources, fact sheets, publications about recovery from sexual abuse, and a letter of hope from another survivor.
Ms. Chris Daley, Esq., 3325 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 340, Los Angeles, CA 90010